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1912

POEMS & SENTIMENT



BY ELLA
MAXWELL
HADDOX





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Poems of Sentiment

By

ELLA MAXWELL HADDOX



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Dedicated—

*To one whose life a poem is :
A poem rare, in which I read
The precepts of true worth, and trace
High thought to noble deed.*



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The Leader

He leads, who reads the law aright,
And thereby shapes his course;
His purpose makes of circumstance
An unavailing force.
Intrenched in strength, unknown the fears
Which lesser souls affright.
He can not fail, who walks with Truth,
And reads the law aright.

He leads, who will not turn aside,
But keeps his onward way,
Unmindful, though about his feet
His hopes in ruin lay;
Who will not swerve though Patience faints,
Though foe and friend deride,
But keeps the path with steps serene—
And will not turn aside.

He leads, who works while others play;
In whose skilled hands is wrought
Some useful service to his race,
With implements of Thought.
Success is his; to him a debt
All Nature seeks to pay.
The great are they who greatly serve—
Who work while others play.

Just Love and I Together

I have been journeying with Love,
Through days of sunny weather,
With none to stay our wayward steps—
Just Love and I together.

We left the world of toil and care
To plod along the highways;
And light of heart, and fleet of foot,
We took the dewy by-ways.

From tangled bowers of sun and shade
The birds came forth to view us.
Forsooth, we were no strangers there:
All forms of Nature knew us.

In gusts of perfume rich, the flowers
A welcome stood repeating;
And e'en the busy bee took time
To mumble forth a greeting.

When dusk had sunk to deeper gloom,
And gleamed the starlight only,
We made a fire of fragrant wood
To cheer the silence lonely.

And as before our hearth we sat,
In Nature's peaceful dwelling,
To please right well my heart's caprice
Strange tales Love would be telling.

Yes, many were the tales he told
Of conquest, real and seeming,
Till burned our fire to ashes gray—
And darkness found us dreaming.



The Victim

The sport of Fortune, and the slave of those
Who rule his life by right of sharper wits;
The stern companionship of Toil is his,
And Penury beside his doorway sits.

Not life, but years, the measure of his time,
For life is more than days by care pursued;
And poor, indeed, existence, where for aye
The soul must starve to give the body food.

For him the crust of bread, the fireless hearth,
The weary day that runs through joyless hours.
For him the dregs of life, because the gods
Saw fit to give him poorly-fashioned powers.

The Road

Adown the long road of the past
The moonlight stretches, wan and white;
And mists of night lie chill upon
This barren highway, coldly bright.

The mournful Winds, with rustling tread,
Sweep over it the dying leaves;
And where the grass once fringed the dust
The lonely cricket softly grieves.

And as I scan the road, which now
Through wastes of desolation lay,
A longing fills my lonely heart
For those who walked with me the way.

To a Friend

Dear friend of mine, when courage faints
Thy faith inspires anew;
And what, though other friends prove false,
So I but find thee true.

In thee I find a prophecy
Of what I fain would be;
And life is filled with hope, since I
Have found a friend in thee.

The highest attributes of life
By friendship are employed;
The highest form of friendship is
By evil unalloyed.

So thus, in naming thee my friend,
I seek to voice thy praise.
Oh, may the chain of friendship bind
My heart to thine always!

To a Rose Upon My Desk

With lifted face, in sweet disdain
Of weak complaint, or useless sigh
For thy abode in summer bowers,
Thou art, sweet rose, more brave than I.

Dost thou not miss the fervent kiss
With which the Sun was wont to woo
Thy beauty to a deeper tint
Than glows at morn on heaven's blue?

Dost thou not miss the gentle rain,
Which Night did weave with artless grace
Into a veil of silver mist
To softly drape thy blushing face?

Ah, would that you and I could fly
This fretted air of ceaseless toil!
In some cloud-shadowed, drowsy glen
The busy Day's intent we'd foil.

Where Summer breathes a sweet content,
And all the air, with languor hung,
Gives back the droning of the bee
And song by idle waters sung—

There, thou, upon thy parent-stem,
Might spend thy fragrant breath in tale
More pleasing to my willing ear
Than those crude sounds which now assail.



Signs of Spring

A thrill of life awakes the listless earth,
Whose valleys cradle still the winter's chill;
From bending skies the flitting cloudlets cast
Their shadowed forms athwart the quiet hills.

On sunny slope, where Morn first sips the dew,
And where the first wild flowers their buds unfold,
The warmth of noon-day woos the waiting spring,
And bids the verdure pierce the lifeless mold.

Where evening mists hang low o'er marsh and stream,
The dismal frog sends forth a haunting call;
The daylight lingers, and the hour grows late
Ere shades of night descend to cover all.

To Fortune

Since I must walk the humbler paths of life,
And count as naught the labors of my day;
Since thou hast played the niggard's part with
me—

Take pride, also, I pray!

Let not mine eyes behold reluctantly
Fair work by others wrought, while these poor
hands
Are powerless to perform the valiant deeds
My burning heart commands.

Thy smile has ever coldly shone on me;
And vexed ofttimes my feet to find the way
O'er which, for others, thy illumining torch
Hath shed a guiding ray.

But if, perchance, through numberless defeats,
I strong should grow with power to conquer thee—
Ah, well I know, if that day e'er should come,
A reckoning there 'll be!

Think not that thou couldst then withhold from
me
The treasures which I long have sought in need;
I'd wrest each gift from out thy grasping hand,
And leave thee poor, indeed.

If We But Knew

If we but knew, when haste we to reprove,
Where frailties cloak a right intent from view,
We would forbear to chide where Nature fails—

If we but knew!

The strength at all times to withstand the wrongs
Which vex our souls is given to but few.
We would not add unto another's woe—

If we but knew!

If we but knew where weary hearts abide
In loneliness to tell the long hours through,
Would we withhold from them the cheering hour—

If we but knew?

Would friendship droop in coldness or neglect
While we—alas!—in thoughtlessness pursue
Some later joy of unfamiliar mien—

If we but knew?

If we but knew where fainting toilers rest
Beside unfinished tasks, when doubts undo
What faith had wrought in willingness and might;

If we but knew

The power of worthy praise^{to} to move again
The nerveless hands to efforts fair and true—
Our Strength would run to seek a brother's need—

If we but knew!

When Fierce Winds Blow

When fierce winds charge in madcap mood
The shadows on their Westward way;
When, through the dusk, like twinkling stars,
The springing lights begin to play;
When Twilight drops from winter skies
A purple gleam upon the snow—
How sweet the sheltered warmth of home
When fierce winds blow!

Though wealth environ not with ease,
And Hardship walk in all his ways;
Though only simple pleasures deign
To grace his uneventful days;
He still is blest who finds the love
Of wife and babes within the glow
That plays upon his humble hearth
When fierce winds blow.

O woman! thine it is to make
The home a glad, a safe retreat;
Toward which, when bleak the storms of life,
The World may turn with weary feet.
Oh, may thy loved ones faring home
Those sweet anticipations know
Which move the steps to joyous pace,
Though fierce winds blow.

Light thou thy hearth, and let it be
A rival to the warmth which lies
Upon thy tender, smiling lips
And glows within thy brooding eyes.
Let strength unveil in acts of love;
Let beauty from thy presence grow;
And thus make home a paradise
When fierce winds blow.



To Cupid

Thou wilful sprite, whose honeyed mandates are
A sweet compulsion none may deign to scorn,
Thy dimpled hand doth hold relentlessly
The destinies of nations yet unborn.

Ah, I could dare the heights which lead to fame;
Could dare contest the claim of kings that be;
Could hurl defiance to the imps below,
Or measure strength with other gods than thee.

But stern Resolve, which often doth befriend,
A traitor is, when thou thy bow hath bent.
As Winter yields to Springtime's warm embrace,
So yields my heart to thy sweet blandishment.

Dreams

They come from regions of the past,
Whence Fancy calls its own,
When shadows sweep the sunlight from
The earth, and day is done.

Grim ghosts of what were living hopes,
They come, a phantom train,
To steal the gladness from the heart
And blanch the lips with pain.

Or, like a breath of melody,
As sweet as buried joy,
Illusions, which the passing years
Are powerless to destroy.

The vagrant breezes waft them through
The purple-falling light,
Whose gleams illumine a pathway for
The coming of the Night.—

Sweet dreams! sad dreams! dear dreams,
withal!—
Possessions of the soul—
Live on till heart shall cease to beat,
And Time my knell shall toll.

Life Phases

The day is filled with clamorings;
Unholy schemes
Incite to turmoil and to strife—
But night brings dreams.

Ambition may a mighty claim
By sunlight prove;
But when the twilight shadows fall,
We want but love.

The beauteous spirit of the Night,
From shadowy dell,
From drifting mists, and murmurous
streams,
Comes forth to tell

Of things eternal; and the soul,
Transcending, too,
Its cruder form of Nature's mold
Delights to view

The mysteries divine, which are
Its own for aye;
Leaving the lure of gold to claim
The garish day.

Discontent

Wherefore thy song, O Poet impotent?

Thy jugglery of words but serves to dress
Old forms in fashions new. We want new
thoughts—

And of thy platitudes—oh, give us less!

Go spread upon thy stupid page some truth—

One little truth by none perceived before—

For we are weary of the things we know,

And fain would other realms of Truth explore.

And thou, O Statesman of the insect-mind!

Canst fit thine honors to no greater deeds?

Of what avail thy boasted power since it

May grant no ministry to human needs?

From out the lore at thy command evolve

And leave one good to thy posterity—

One lasting benefit—and thou shall want

No sculptured guardian of thy memory.

Ye ministers, who walk, with pompous tread,

With pious look, and heavenward-turning eye,

The winding way, tell us of that fair land

One simple fact which no man can deny.

We know not whence we came, nor whither we,
With faltering, uncertain steps, are bound.
With shackled feet, in pace by Custom set,
We run Life's little, uneventful round.



Slumber Song

Sleep, baby, sleep, for the twilight is falling;
Darkness is dimming the glow in the West.
Hear from the woodland the whip-poor-will
calling!

Sweet may thy dreams be, and peaceful thy
rest.

Fairies are dancing where shadows lie deep;
Hush-a-bye, hush-a-bye! Sleep, baby—sleep!

Sleep, baby, sleep, for the Night Winds are sing-
ing

Over thy cradle a murmurous strain.

List how the Leaves in a chorus are bringing

Back through the darkness a whispered refrain.

Happy dreams over thy weary lids creep!

Hush-a-bye, hush-a-bye! Sleep, baby—sleep!

Questionings

Thou marble brow, and pallid lips, whereon
A smile once crept to answer Love's sweet call,
Thou tired eyes, now veiled in Death's long sleep—
Ah, tell me not, I pray, that this ends all!

A few brief hours ago and Life did clothe
This silent clay in garments of a god;
And now we lay it where but late the feet,
With strides of courage, spurned the lowly sod.

But where is now the spirit, with its song
Of joyousness, its cry of grief or care?
We know it was, and fain we would believe
That still it doth exist—somewhere, somewhere.

But not within the icy clasp of Death,
For did it there repose its warmth would move
The pulseless heart again to vibrant life.
Alas! this frozen form its absence proves.

And so we choose to think unfinished Life
Will read its purpose in some future state:
Where we shall gather up the threads of Time
And weave the fabric of eternal fate.

Rain Fancies

The wet Night breathes a lullaby
As softly sweet
As ever mother sang, to soothe
Her babe to sleep.

Around the open doorway, where
The shadows loom,
A sodden vine its perfume wafts
Into the gloom.

Where tangled grasses weave a web
Of meshes light,
A chant of insect-voices climbs
The silent night.

The senses swoon with languor, half
Of joy, half pain,
As o'er them steals the magic of
The fragrant rain;

And o'er the restless spirit falls,
Like cooling balm,
The great and changeless majesty
Of Nature's calm.

Lines on Death of an Infant

No pomp of custom need itself engage
To sing thy praise, or fancied worth extol;
Earth held no bonds to fix thy grasp on life,
And leaves no trace of time upon thy soul.

The miracle of love will ne'er awake
Within thy heart the deadly pulse of fear;
Nor will its sweet illusions bring thee joy
Where Sorrow bids thee drop a ready tear.

Why should we wish to call thy spirit back?
Life is, at best, a gift of doubtful worth;
Its good or ill not always ours to choose,
But ours more oft by accident of birth.

Who sees man's possibilities and powers
His limitations also must perceive;
The heart that thrills to greatest ecstasy
Will in adversity most deeply grieve.

To place distinction's badge upon our breast
We sell the trust that binds us to our kind.
We seek for fame, yet in its honeyed voice
The flattery of coward hearts we find.

Then sleep, sweet babe—Love's promise unful-
filled—

Eternity a recompense may give
For those fleet joys which light with passing
gleam

The years of those who Time's allotment live.



A Summer Evening Rain

The rain, before a lazy wind,
Crept o'er the mountain's rim,
And threw a cloud of silver spray
Into the valleys dim.

It moved through forest, field, and glade
On wings of listlessness;
It touched the shadow-freighted trees
With lingering caress.

And where the waters of the brook
'Twixt fragrant meadow play,
A host of merry raindrops danced
The evening hours away.

The green Earth wrapped itself in mist,
As waned the fading light,
And sank to dreamy slumber in
The restful arms of Night.

Two Lives

Where simple living made no claim
 To chronicle of knightly deed;
Where little hopes and little aims
 Conformed themselves to little creeds;
Unblessed by aught which promise gave
 Of wealth, or fame, or kingly sway;
Of peasant stock, unlearned and poor,
 Two baby boys were born one day.

To one the passing of the years
 Contentment brought—and little more.
Few were his wants, and few the gifts
 He took from Life's unbounded store.
No aspirations of his soul
 Dared cleave the sky on soaring wings;
His quiet and unthinking mind
 Attuned itself to little things.

The other dared to question Life,
 To cast aside established creeds;
To be, to do, to have, to hold,
 To set his mind to mighty deeds.
Mankind may catch from history
 The dreams which burned within his soul—
Leading him up the steep ascent
 To reach, at last, the victor's goal.

To Music

Thou greatest of all sweet mysteries save Love,
Through thee the soul beholds its dream fulfilled.

Thy melody in sweetness is attuned
To whatsoe'er intent the heart is willed.

With thy triumphant tones' tumultuous blast
I feel the rush of Life's stupendous power;
And high resolve flames forth from smouldering
hope,
While mighty conquest crowns the passing hour.

Or if, perchance, in softer moods, I stray
Through fancied realms of thy sweet harmony,
Where twilight shades steal out to dim the glow
Of sunset lights upon thy golden sea—

A sadness, born of hallowed memories,
Comes through the gloom, and all my being fills;
And loneliness enfolds me as the mists
Which lie at eve upon the silent hills.

Thou art to me the best of all I am;
The greatest of the things I hope to be!
Oh, would the Muse inspire to greater worth,
That I might sing more fittingly of thee!

The Snow-Storm

The snow began when clouds hung low,
And earth was bare and brown;
When boding shadows filled the air,
Through which the flakes came down
Like Springtime's wind-blown petals fair,
Through countryside and town.

The wind was slow on mountain crest,
And slept in vales below;
It stirred the tops of distant trees,
But breathed o'er plumes of snow
Which formed where earthward-nodding
shrubs
Their branches bended low.

And all day long, through sullen air,
The drifting snowflakes fell,
Till white knolls looked like wind-blown
sails,
And forest, field, and dell
Were turned into a mystic world,
In which strange forms did dwell.

Imprisoned in their tiny cells,
Within the trackless white,

And guarded by the shifting clouds,
A million points of light
Awaited but the Sun's command
To burst upon the sight.

And when the shades of eve had shot
The snow with purple gleams,
Which deepened into violet
In pools of woodland streams,
The Twilight stole into a world
Of silence and of dreams.



A Protest

What wouldst thou more, O Tyrant? Have I not
Upon thine altar laid an offering
Of sleepless nights, and days of sad unrest?
Dost feel no trace of pity, when I bring
Thee true account of hours of tortured thought?
Of longings which with vain insistence stir
The heart to fruitless quest of happiness?
Take from my wrists these chains of gossamer!
That I may seek forgetfulness in toil;
May join the busy days with restful nights.
I would forswear allegiance, since thou
Dost fashion of my woes such strange delights.

The Acorn and the Oak

Within the damp and clinging earth,
Where darkness spans a world unseen,
An acorn dreamed; and, dreaming, saw
Blue skies and forests green.

It dreamed of light, where all was gloom;
It dreamed of strength, where none prevailed
Save that which held the dream, when dark
And threatening powers assailed.

It saw itself an oak, whose crest
From Morn's first blush a halo caught;
In whose broad boughs the weary birds
At eve a shelter sought.

And as in hopefulness it dreamed,
The unbelieving earth made room;
And, powerless to repress, did haste
To friendliness assume.

Thou, too, dream on, O Soul! and let
Not things which seem thy faith undo;
For All of Life concerns itself
To make thy dream come true.

My Choice

I'd rather take the trail when Morn
O'er my enraptured spirit flings
Her thousand subtle charms, and gives
The touch of life to lifeless things;
I'd rather search in dewy glades
To find where star-faced blossoms lurk;
Or list the skylark's merry note—
Than work.

I'd rather have a quiet cot,
And dwell amid the friendly fields;
Where Nature's store meets Nature's need.
And life a sweet contentment yields;
Where sunlight floods a world of song;
Where free winds sweep, and buds unfold—
I'd rather have a home like that—
Than gold.

I'd rather have the love of one
Whose song of hope along the way
Would cheer my weary heart, when dark
The path through shadowed regions lay;
Whose faith and trust would scorn to ask
The sanction of a world's acclaim—
I'd rather have a love like that—
Than fame.



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